

Dora Keen Photograph Collection, 1911

Overview of the Collection

Collector	Keen, Dora, b. 1871
Title	Dora Keen Photograph Collection
Dates	1911 (inclusive) 1911 1911
Quantity	17 photographic prints (1 folder)
Collection Number	PH0453
Summary	Photographs of a woman climber's expedition to Mt. Blackburn
Repository	University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Special Collections University of Washington Libraries Box 352900 Seattle, WA 98195-2900 Telephone: 206-543-1929 Fax: 206-543-1931 speccoll@uw.edu
Access Restrictions	The collection is open to the public.
Languages	English
Sponsor	Funding for encoding this finding aid was partially provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Biographical Note

According to the American Alpine Club Annals, Dora Keen became the first woman to mountain climb in Alaska. Born in 1871, Dora Keen defied social norms of the day by taking up mountain climbing and traveling in her late thirties, after obtaining an education from Bryn Mawr. One of the world's first female mountaineers, she was the first person ever to climb the peak of Mt. Blackburn. The highest peak in the Wrangell Mountains range, Alaska, Mt. Blackburn is considered the fifth highest peak in the United States and the twelfth highest peak in North America. Covered almost entirely by icefields and glaciers, Mt. Blackburn is the primary source of ice for the Kennicott Glacier and contributes a large volume of ice to the north flowing Nabesna Glacier and the Kuskulana Glacier system.

Keen's 1911 expedition to Mt. Blackburn was a groundbreaking trip for mountaineering. It was the first expedition to use dogs on a mountain, the first to succeed without Swiss guides, the first to camp in snow caves, and the first to make a prolonged night ascent. Her first expedition to the peak was undertaken with only four gold-miners, Charlie McGonagall, Pete Anderson, Billy Taylor and Tom Lloyd, and a team of sled dogs. After multiple attempts to reach the summit via various routes, inadequate supplies and bad weather forced the party to turn back after two weeks. Keen returned to Mt. Blackburn with George W. Handy to successfully reach the summit on May 19, 1912, via the Kennicott Glacier and East Face. Dora Keen and George Handy married four years later. In 1960 when the first of the USGS maps were published, it was discovered that the eastern peak (now called Mt. Kennedy) climbed by Keen, was the shorter of the two peaks of Mt. Blackburn.

Content Description

This collection consists of photographs from Dora Keen's first attempt to summit Mt. Blackburn. Images include panoramas of Mt. Blackburn, views of Mt. Reynolds, glaciers, members of the climbing party, and features of Mt. Blackburn. Also included are photos of the Bonanza Mine area.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

Restrictions may exist on reproduction, quotation, or publication. Contact Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries for details.

Preferred Citation

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Administrative Information

Arrangement

Photographs are arranged in original order of the trip based upon Dora Keen's numbering. Each photo includes comments on the back made by Dora Keen. The sequence of images reflects the multiple attempts of Keen's party to reach the summit via various routes.

Processing Note

Processed by Erin O'Brien and Megan Peacock; processing completed in 2006.

Bibliography

Keen, Dora, b. 1871. *Mountain climbing in Alaska; the first expedition to Mount Blackburn* Reprinted from *Appalachia*, v. 12, no. 4

Detailed Description of the Collection

Container(s)		Description	Dates
Folder	Item		
1	1	<p>Crevasse on glacier[view] “Crevasse near head of Kennicott Glacier. Many such & dangerous because usually covered by melting snow. 4th day, and not yet at foot of mountain.”</p>	1911
1	2	<p>View of Kennicott Glacier with tents at the foot of Mt. Blackburn[view] “Our camp at foot of Mr. Blackburn (tents & lean to at left) & Kennicott Glacier up which we had come, 35m. long, and badly crevassed. Mt. Blackburn at right 3m. across, not here seen. 6th day.”</p>	1911
1	3	<p>Four part panorama of Mt. Reynolds[view] “Mt. Reynolds and Reynolds Glacier, from above our base camp. 6th day.”</p>	1911
1	4	<p>Five part panorama of Mt. Blackburn “Mt. Blackburn 16,140 ft. from far up above rocky point - on which we had our base camp. Summit not visible. 1 & 3 indicate routes tried & abandoned. Route 1—Barrett Glacier too long & too dangerous from avalanches, 5th to 8th days. Route 2 – McClellan Glacier, was abandoned as also too dangerous, although not until a point hidden by the ridge (at 3) had been reached, 9th day. Route 3 – named by my men Keen Ridge, was abandoned at 3,8700 ft., on the 10th day, because of 3 day storm after which our failing supplies would have been exhausted. 8,700 ft. was reached three successive times at different points tried.” Numbers 1, 2, and 3 are marked in pencil on the front of the photograph.</p>	1911
1	5	<p>Barrett Glacier[view] “Barrett Glacier from base camp. To reach 2 [*] on it took 4 days of precious good weather & food in vain. Constant avalanches made it unsafe to stop to chop steps except from 3-9 a.m. summit to left of what seems highest point. * Number 2 marked in pencil on photo.</p>	1911
1	6	<p>Hiker in front of glacier[view] “Baffled on our 2nd route, McClellan Glacier, 9th day, 10:50 am. Forty tons of ice ready to fall on us & all holes underfoot, fierce sun loosening everything. Unsafe to stop</p>	1911

Container(s)	Description	Dates
	under walls to chop steps, and impossible to get 'ashore' to ridge, so down."	
1 7	McClellan Glacier [view] "McClellan Glacier from the ridge, showing point [*] to which we had worked only to turn down because of the hour of the day –too soft. 9th day, 4 pm." *Point indicated in description circled in pencil on the photo.	1911
1 8	Two hikers and dogs on a rock ridge "9th day 6:10 pm. The route forwards was over a dangerously rotten snow saddle, so we slept on these rocks (no room for a tent) and the next day expected to climb down to the bad glacier below, seek a way along it and climb up on the ridge again."	1911
1 9	Ridge to the summit of Mt. Blackburn [view] "Looking up the ridge from 8700 ft., the route we believe to be feasible. 10th day, 10 a.m."	1911
1 10	Four climbers, three dogs and snowshoes on mountainside [view] "Descending the ridge – down & up again. All 4 men and 3 dogs in sight. Kennicott glacier in perspective. 10th day, 12:15 p.m."	1911
1 11	McClellan Glacier "10th day, 12:45 p.m. Looking down onto McClellan Glacier, the second one that had balked us." Nearly identical to item 7.	1911
1 12	Dora Keen on a dog-sled with two team members on either side [view] "12th day, 7:30 a.m. My ten-minute sled ride, 11/2 hours after leaving base camp."	1911
1 13	Dogsled on gravel between glaciers "13th day, 11a.m. Dragging the broken sled over gravel from one ribbon of clean ice to another when one became to badly crevassed."	1911
1 14	Mt. Blackburn [view] "Mt. Blackburn 16,140ft. from Bonanza Mt., 7000 ft., 1000 ft. above Bonanza Mine at Kennicott. 30m. from the mountain."	1911

Container(s)	Description	Dates
1 15	Distant view of Kennicott Glacier "End of Kennicott Glacier, from half way up to Bonanza Mine. At right streaks of clean ice, from which we had to 'jack' out. At left aerial tram for ore buckets."	1911
1 16	Rock face with mountain ridge behind "Copper ore in brilliant streaks at right. At left trail to Jumbo Mine."	1911
1 17	Bonanza Mine with mountain peak rising behind [view] "Bonanza Mine from above showing aerial tram line for ore at right, & at left trail down to Kennicott. Bunk house (log) in center cost \$12,500."	1911

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Glaciers--Alaska--Photographs
 Mountaineering expeditions--Photographs
 Mountaineering--Alaska--Photographs
 Mountaineering--Photographs
 Mountains--Alaska--Photographs
 Snow and ice climbing--Alaska--Photographs
 Women mountaineers--Photographs

Personal Names :

Keen, Dora, b. 1871--Photographs

Geographical Names :

Blackburn, Mount (Alaska)--Photographs
 Wrangell Mountains--Photographs

Form or Genre Terms :

Photographic prints
 Photographs

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Visual Materials Collections (University of Washington)

2008 (Last modified: 4/16/2018)



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